

KEITH D. JONES and CHRISTOPHER K. JONES

FATHER AND BROTHER OF GORDON LEWIS JONES,

WHO DIED ABOARD THE *DEEPWATER HORIZON*

HEARING: “LEGAL LIABILITY ISSUES SURROUNDING THE GULF  
COAST DISASTER”

HEARING DATE AND TIME—MAY 27, 2010 at 10:00 a.m.

**Testimony  
Before the Judiciary Committee  
United States House of Representatives  
May 27, 2010**

***Damage Caused by Transocean Deepwater Horizon  
Explosion – A Father's Statement***

**Keith D. Jones**

Chairman Conyers, Ranking Member Smith, and other members of the Committee, it is an honor to be allowed to speak with you today.

My name is Keith Jones. I am a lawyer from Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Seated behind me is my older son, Chris, who also practices law in Baton Rouge. Chris and I appear before you today not as attorneys, but as the father and brother of Gordon Jones, who was killed on the Transocean Deepwater Horizon. Gordon was a mud engineer for M-I Swaco, who had a contract with BP to provide that service. We're also here for Gordon's wife Michelle, for his sons Stafford and Maxwell Gordon, for his mother Missy, and for his sister Katie.

At the outset, I want you to know that just because I am addressing you today does not mean that I believe Gordon's death was more tragic or more important than the deaths of the other ten men that day. I'm certain their families grieve just as much as we do.

Those men were:

Jason Anderson was from Bay City, Texas and leaves behind two children.

Aaron Dale Burkeen was 37. He lived in Neshoba County near Philadelphia, Mississippi. He is survived by a wife and two children, both teenagers.

two sons: Stafford, who is two, and Maxwell Gordon, who was born 13 days ago.

Gordon received his Bachelor of Arts degree from LSU. His degree was not in engineering. All the engineering a mud engineer needs to know is learned in Mud School, a course of education provided by his employer M-I Swaco that lasted about six months. After completing Mud School, Gordon worked for some time aboard a variety of rigs as a Compliance Officer, in which capacity he was able to watch and learn from experienced mud engineers.

Before long Gordon was working as a mud engineer himself. I remember when he went out for his first hitch as a mud engineer. He was nervous, not a condition I saw in Gordon very often. But he had been well trained, and he completed that hitch and the many that followed with no serious problems.

As a relative newcomer, Gordon was sent to a different rig every two weeks, filling in for one of that rig's regular mud engineers who was on vacation or unable to work for some other reason. It was in that capacity that Gordon first served aboard the Transocean Deepwater Horizon.

That Gordon was good at what he did was evidenced by the fact that when one of the mud engineers assigned to the Deepwater Horizon left, BP was offered a list of mud engineers who had worked aboard the Horizon and from that list chose Gordon.

As I am sure you have been made aware, the Deepwater Horizon was a rig of considerable prestige. It was a very large rig that drilled in very deep water and found very big deposits of oil. It was as successful an exploration rig as BP operated, I believe, and last year discovered the second largest deposit of oil in the history of the United States.

Gordon was proud of the fact that he had earned a spot on such a prestigious rig, but he never bragged about it. And he was proud that he had been so successful so soon in his career, allowing his wife Michelle to quit her job last year. With one young son and another on the way, Michelle wanted to be a full-time mom.

expense of others and they would never get mad at him for it. It was a gift he had.

And Gordon was a gift we had.

The first picture I'd like to share is my favorite because it was taken only a few days before his death and because I was standing right behind Michelle when she took it. Gordon was giving Stafford his first golf lesson. It was, of course, the last lesson he would get from his father. I remember driving away from that scene and thinking, "They are so happy!"

The next picture is of Gordon, Michelle and Stafford soon after Stafford's birth. I've had the pleasure of being with all three of my children when their first children came into the world. But I can't say I ever saw a prouder parent than Gordon. You'd have thought he was the first man ever to father a child.

The next picture is of Michelle and Maxwell Gordon, taken 13 days ago. Sadly, Gordon's presence is limited to his picture, taken with Michelle and Stafford last Easter.

Gordon was a great father to Stafford. He was tireless. Any time Stafford wanted to play his dad was ready. Perhaps the saddest story about Gordon's death, and there are many, is that Stafford is just too young to be able to remember his father in the years to come. Of course, Maxwell Gordon will never know his dad. His knowledge of his father will be limited to pictures and what Michelle and others tell him. We don't have to be psychologists to know that's not enough.

None of us will even be able to visit a cemetery where Gordon was laid to rest. To watch the videos of the fire was to know that Gordon's body was cremated. Then the fireboats washed his ashes out to sea. I must admit that having nothing to say goodbye to is much, much harder than I thought it would be. Call it closure or whatever, but something is missing for us.

You may note that I haven't mentioned how much Gordon made. There's a reason for that. The loss of Gordon's income is the last thing Michelle grieves for. When Michelle tells her boys about their dad, she's not going to show them a pay stub. She will tell them how much their father loved them, how much he loved to play with Stafford. She'll tell them how

I have been a lawyer long enough to know that no one will ever apologize for the damage they did. But I am nevertheless perplexed by the fact that none of the representatives of any of the companies who caused or might have caused this accident have expressed the slightest remorse over the loss of eleven lives.

I am an environmentalist. I worry about the Louisiana wetlands, the Florida beaches and all the other of our precious land endangered by this oil spill. I worry about the men and women who make their living providing shrimp, fish, oysters and crabs for American tables. But I do believe this: after much work, perhaps for many years, this mess will be cleaned up. The wrongdoers here can pay enough money to those who have lost their ability to make a living to make that right. And eventually the shrimp will be back. The oysters and crabs and fish will be back.

And BP will be back. We have heard over and over about the billions of dollars BP's stock has fallen. But the fact is, BP is selling for about the same price it was a year ago. So BP, Transocean, Halliburton and any other company will be back because they have the infrastructure and economic might to make more money.

But Gordon will never be back; never. And neither will any of the ten good men who died with him. The grief suffered by their families will never stop.

Now the future of those families is in your hands. The future of other families of workers on other rigs is in your hands. Only you have the power to take away the motivation to shortcut safety to increase profits. I urge you to do the right thing.

Thank you for listening. Either Chris or I will be happy to answer any questions you have.